

Warren & Baram isn't your run-of-the-mill modeling agency. In fact, it's not an agency at all. "We are what you'd call a full-service managing group," states native New Yorker Jonathan Baram of his nine-year-old company, which represents some of the hottest, most sought-after Black and Latina models in the game. His roster includes Nicole Narain, (*SMOOTH* covergirl, *Playboy* Playmate, and most recently, Colin Farrell's sex tape partner), Vida Guerra (the ass that launched a million magazines), Melyssa

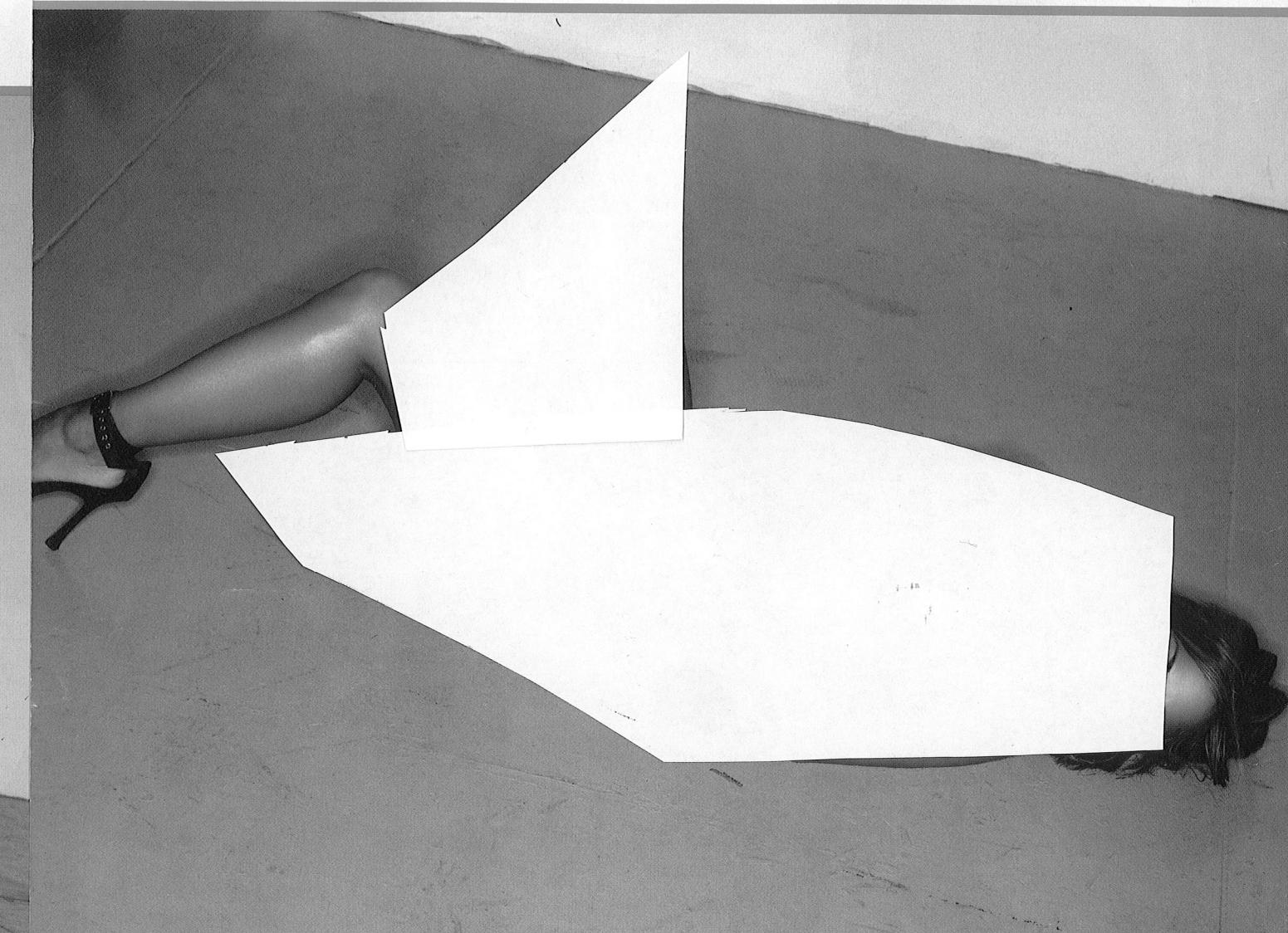
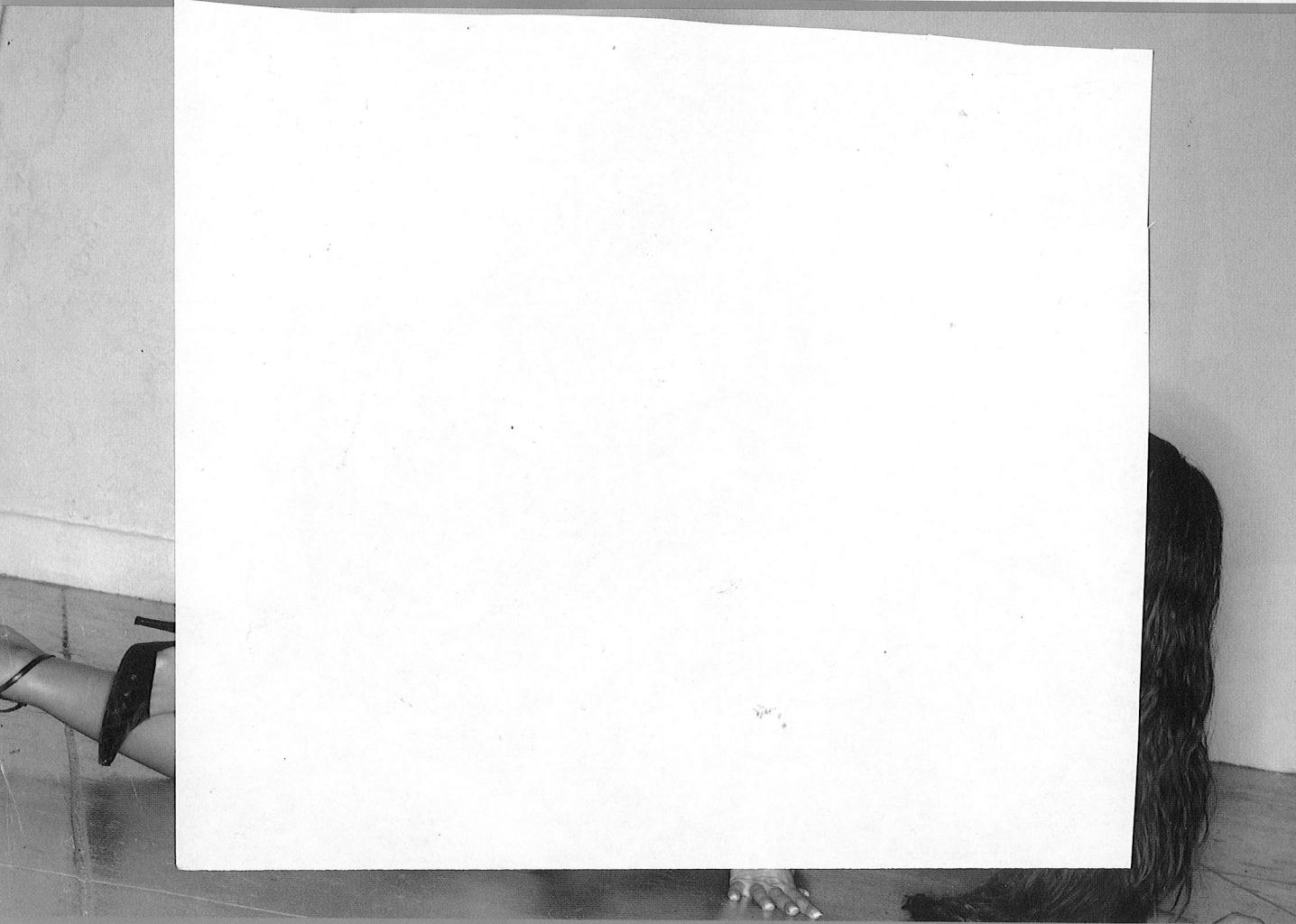
How did you get started in this crazy fantasy job?
I'm a triplet, so it was very easy to get representation when I was a kid. At ages 13 to 25, I was signed with the Ford agency, contracted by Ralph Lauren, and shot by Bruce Weber. My rate was \$150 an hour as a kid. So I was in that sort of life. Throughout college, my walls were cluttered with the models of that era, because I really wanted to represent fashion models. Then I worked for Elite for a while, and it really taught me that I didn't want to represent fashion models at all. These models

In your line of work, how do you separate business and pleasure?
When I first started out, I said, "I'm not going to hit on the girls; I'm going to keep it business." And this is coming from someone who loves women. I love Spanish girls—I date them all the time. All ethnicities. I just love curvy, sexy girls. I've always been very attracted to the whole Spanish culture, everything about it. I mean, they're nurturing women. I've had Spanish girlfriends where we watch a movie and I get a massage the whole

City. I took advantage of the Bronx. I built my company on the 1 train. That's how I built my business, just looking everywhere, whether I'm on a train or in McDonald's. Once I had a little core of, like, 10 girls and proved my intentions were good, I offered them 10% of my 20% in writing, and they scouted for me. I have girls making six figures just by doing this. Girls like Nicole

eight hours. Our rate fluctuates from \$1500 to \$10,000 a day, \$10,000 being for someone like Nicole Narain. I like to ask for things that are realistic. I'm never going to say, "Give this girl \$50,000 for a video," but if you've got a girl who's on the cover of *SMOOTH* and she's a hot Playmate, I feel that she should get \$10,000.

What about beef with magazines? Do they fight over who gets the girls?
I'm definitely in the middle of it all. Magazines always want to put a certain girl out first. Personally, I think it's like high school. And one thing I can say about *SMOOTH* is that you guys never let me down with a bad picture. And that's the truth. Most magazines, as much as 60%



Ford (*SMOOTH*'s own sexologist), and Nancy E. (*SMOOTH Girl* #1's breakout star), to name a few.

But Baram is a manager, not an agent. While agents are well-known for only being out for their 10% of their clients' income, he prefers to take on more of a mentor role. He nurtures his models, cares for them "like [his] own sisters," and makes them ridiculous amounts of money by getting them jobs in everything from music videos to feature films to the magazine you hold in your hands. Not bad work if you can get it.

in person...they're really not hot. The more high-fashion you go, they look like E.T. And it didn't interest me to get on the phone and promote these types of girls.

So you decided to go the Latina route?

When I first started representing Latinas, it wasn't a market. In 1996, magazines like *SMOOTH* weren't around. I watched it evolve. So I decided to represent women that I have a passion for. I'm a Spanish Jew myself, so it's in my blood. My intention was to represent sexy and exotic women, but in a legitimate and professional way.

time, through the whole movie. Beans are cooking in the oven and I'm getting a backrub. So for me, this takes discipline, but it's not hard at all. I look at my bank account and I'm okay.

How do you scout? Are you the scary guy who picks up girls in the mall with the "I'm gonna make you a star" line?

Well, now is different from back in the day. Now I just get inundated with calls. Thank you, *SMOOTH*. But back when I had no clients, I took advantage of New York ►

Narain and Vida, they've brought tons of clients to me, and I'm happy to pay.

Nicole Narain, Vida, Melyssa Ford, Carla Campbell... What are you doing right?

Representing these types of clients in New York, I have no competition. And you can quote me on that. If I did, I'd make him my business partner. I want to have competition, but I'm the only manager that's doing contracts for music videos. We changed the game. And the rates, too. Most girls are getting \$250 a day for

of the time, I don't even use their pictures in my book. But *SMOOTH* hasn't let me down like that.

Well, thanks. You keep providing the hotness and we'll keep showing it to the world. Speaking of providing the hotness, have you ever been likened to, say...a pimp?

People just invent shit. Like I tried to block a girl at a casting or some shit like that. People say that I'm a real pimp, and it doesn't offend me. It makes me laugh. You don't even know me. I'm a *legitimate* pimp. ■